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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEAWJB/DOJ WASHDC
RHHJJAA/JICPAC HONOLULU HI
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
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RUCXNMC/NATMARINTCEN WASHINGTON DC
RUEAWJB/DOJ WASHDC//ICITAP//
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SUBJECT: GAM REINTEGRATION SLOW, ECONOMY AND POLITICS NOT
HELPING

REFTELS: (A) JAKARTA 04034
(B) JAKARTA 00654
(C) 05 JAKARTA 15331

Summary

¶1. (SBU) On April 10 former Free Aceh Movement (GAM) activists hosted a prayer meeting (Doa Bersama) in Tiro, Aceh, to mark Mohammed's Birthday, attracting over 1000 Acehnese from throughout the province. At the meeting, Conoff had numerous discussions about the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed last August between GAM and GOI, GAM reintegration, economic conditions in Aceh, and Aceh-Jakarta relations. Expressing frustration at the slow pace of development, all agreed Aceh needed more jobs for young men and more investment in infrastructure. Many of the attendees worried that the new law for Aceh (RUU) currently under debate in Indonesia's Parliament would not accord with the MOU. Distrust of the national government remains high, and participants asked that the Aceh Monitoring Mission (AMM) continue even after the upcoming elections. Former GAM members made clear they still believe Aceh will ultimately be independent. End Summary.

¶2. (U) On April 10 former GAM Governor for Tiro, Khalidin, hosted a prayer meeting (Doa Bersama) in Tiro, Aceh, to mark Mohammed's Birthday. Members of the organizing committee included Abu Muslimin, GAM elder statesman, and Maimun, grandson of an Aceh Governor during the Sukarno period. In

addition to former GAM, the committee invited former Indonesian military (TNI), provincial government officials, officials from AMM, and U.S. Consulate Medan to attend. Over 1000 Achenese from throughout the province passed through the site during the day, including groups of youths. Organizers told us that former GAM members made up roughly ten percent of the attendees. As at a previous GAM-related event in Bireuen (REF C), we went to hold discussions with participants and gauge GAM thinking.

The Story in Signs

¶3. (U) The organizers chose Tiro, hometown of GAM Founder and Chief Hasan di Tiro, for the event to emphasize the now legitimate role the former GAM has in political and social processes in Aceh (REF B). To underscore the point, GAM has erected a large sign marking GAM-Tiro headquarters. The ceremony took place near this site. On the way into town, another sign still marks a checkpoint that TNI maintained until the MOU-directed TNI redeployment from Aceh in 2005. At the gathering, several participants sported Aceh flag pins on their clothes. Not everything indicated the process has favored GAM or benefited the Acehnese people. One young man attending the event wore a shirt emblazoned with one word, "Frustration."

Frustration

¶4. (U) In discussions with numerous men (women and men did not mix) during the day-long ceremony we heard complaints about the slow-pace of the reintegration process for former

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GAM combatants. Unless their families already had some capital, former combatants apparently have few job opportunities, though some had returned to family farms. Similarly, former TNI members attending the event complained about the lack of opportunities in Aceh.

¶6. (U) Many attendees noted the MOU requires farm land or employment for former GAM combatants but does not specify how economic development could occur in Aceh. They also lamented the issues the MOU does not cover -- for example, foreign investment and education. We pointed out that the new provincial government would have responsibility for most issues and that the MOU sought only to bring an end to the conflict and establish a framework for peaceful reintegration of the former combatants.

¶7. (U) In several conversations, former combatants compared themselves unfavorably with victims of the December 2004 tsunami and earthquake. They wondered why the millions of

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dollars in aid for Aceh reconstruction could not go to help them. We explained that much of that donors had provided that money specifically for tsunami relief and NGOs could not spend it otherwise. Many former combatants thought the GOI could provide more economic relief.

Campaign Themes?

¶8. (U) Attendees at the ceremony pointed to numerous areas of concern. Although they did not identify these as possible issues for the upcoming elections in Aceh, any GAM-backed candidate presumably would need to address them (REF B). Foremost remains the need for jobs. The young men want to work and feel stymied in their efforts by lack of opportunities and of training. The older men know that without something for young men to do, social and security problems will occur. Some attendees worry about the state of education in Aceh; they think children in Aceh do not receive adequate education at the primary level and want

resources to educate former GAM fighters for employment.

¶9. (U) Although parts of Aceh receive funds to rebuild infrastructure damaged or destroyed by the tsunami and earthquake, much of the rest of the province also suffers underdeveloped roads, bridges, ports, water, sanitation, and electricity generation and distribution. Participants decried what they perceive not as benign neglect but as targeted inadequate investment in infrastructure. "Why," one former GAM member from East Timor asked, "do all our goods come through Medan when we could have a better port in Sabang?"

¶10. (U) At any gathering of Acehese activist, discussion will turn to sharing the proceeds of the extraction of Aceh's natural resources. The MOU specifies that Aceh should receive 70 percent of revenue from "current and future hydrocarbon deposits and other natural resources," and many people in Aceh see these funds as more than sufficient to spark rapid economic development. As in other such encounters, we point out that such revenue might prove considerably less than anticipated and not last as long as Acehese think.

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Distrust of Jakarta

¶11. (SBU) Predictably, former GAM members accuse the GOI of shortchanging Aceh in infrastructure investment and revenue sharing from ExxonMobil's Lhokseumawe facility. (NOTE: ExxonMobil contributes mightily to Aceh, above and beyond its contractual obligations, including generous donations to post-tsunami relief and reconstruction. Many Acehese erroneously think revenue from ExxonMobil's Lhokseumawe facility could fund Aceh's economic development. END NOTE.) Despite the amnesty of former combatants and redeployment of non-organic troops and police from Aceh, as required by the MOU, former GAM members have no trust in the GOI to protect the rights of Acehese. Many see "playing politics" with the new law for Aceh as symptomatic of the Jakarta-centric view of Aceh. They fear the law will not track with the conditions of the MOU, for example, by allowing for the break-up of Aceh and not allowing independent candidates in the upcoming elections. (NOTE: Although the MOU does describe the borders of Aceh, it does not explicitly prohibit future consideration of different political configurations; nor does the MOU address the issue of independent candidates, though it does stipulate provision for local political parties. END NOTE.)

¶12. (SBU) Many attendees said pro-Jakarta militias in Aceh continue to have weapons, threatening the long-term stability of the province. They hope AMM would continue its role as observer and arbiter well past the election. The AMM, they said, brought international attention to Aceh and assure GOI adherence to the MOU. Without AMM and other international observers, many of the attendees do not think a fair election could occur. Former GAM members worry international observers would depart after the election at which time GOI and militias would reassert themselves and suppress legitimate political activity.

Independence

¶13. (SBU) Throughout the day of the ceremony, participants made clear they did not see independence for Aceh as a dead issue. In addition to the almost casual distinction between "Aceh" and "Indonesia" by the attendees, several participants asked directly for USG support for an independent Aceh -- we reiterated US support for Indonesia's territorial integrity. One organizing committee member asked when the U.S. would open an Embassy in Aceh. After we explained each country has only one Embassy though might

have several Consulates, he smiled wryly and said, "That's the issue, isn't it?" The Acehnese view themselves as different culturally from the rest of Indonesia, particularly the Javanese. Talk of independence does not imply rejection of the MOU, but more an avowal of the "separateness" Acehnese think they possess.

The Dog that Didn't Bark

¶14. (U) We saw notable for their absences in the discussions any mention of Islamic Syaria law (REF A), political parties, and individual candidates for the upcoming

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elections. No one addressed whether the new law for Aceh should reinforce Islamic law in Aceh or whether GAM supports enforcing Islamic law in Aceh. In all the discussions about the upcoming elections, no one mentioned political parties by name and only referred generically to independent candidates without offering specific individuals who might run. We saw only one potential gubernatorial candidate who briefly attended the event, Humam Hamid, despite the presence of a ready audience anxious to make their views known about the future of Aceh.

Pascoe